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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001859

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STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE ROAD AHEAD FOR SENEGAL, S OPPOSITION

REF: DAKAR 1821

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D, AFFAIRES JAY SMITH FOR REASONS 1.
4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a meeting with the Charge D'Affaires, the leaders of Senegal's main opposition parties explained their current campaign to hold a National Dialogue and warned that Senegal was faced with the triple threat of an unstable political situation, an out-of-control economy, and social discontent.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) Socialist Party leader, Osman Tanor Dieng, opened the discussion by asserting that the opposition boycott of the legislative election was the reason why turnout was so low. "We urged people not to vote and the government's excuse that people did not because the elections were not important is untrue. Wade invested lot of personal time and effort in the campaign." Dieng emphasized that he and his compatriots were still looking to a dialogue with the President and were disappointed that, even after the "clear message the people sent him," he still refuses to meet with them. Dieng also condemned recent statements by the Cap 21, a group close to the President, who claim the Front Siggil Senegal is trying to destabilize the country.

The Succession

¶3. (C) Criticizing the Senate as a monochromatic chamber, Dieng said that Wade will probably pick opposition members to make it look diverse. He and his colleagues believe that the Senate is just another piece in Wade's larger plan to designate his successor. Madieyna Diouf, Deputy Secretary General of the Alliance Force for Progress, agreed with this assessment, adding that there were even rumors that Wade was planning to revive Article 35 of the Constitution (Note: this Article was conceived to allow President Senghor to pick his successor). Amath Dansokho, an outspoken former Communist and current Secretary General of his Party for Independence and Labor, was even blunter saying that Wade had been planning this since 1998 and reminded us of Wade's famous comment that the PDS would rule Senegal for 50 years. He went on to say that the reason why he broke with his former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck was to prepare son Karim's rise. He then declared that Wade did not want to meet with them because he knows full well that they would never support his schemes and that is why he is so bent on crushing his opposition. Dieng then remarked that he could not work out Wade's relationship with Seck and that both were as bad as each other (see ref A).

The Future is Bleak -- or so They Claim

14. (C) Arguing that the country was faced with deepening economic problems and an untenable political situation, Dieng touted an "Assises Nationales" (National Dialogue) to restore harmony. He added that, while they wanted Wade to join them, it was not a necessity. Dansokho then dramatically asserted that "I can't guarantee what is happening in Somalia won't happen here, but there are regressive forces at play that have hitherto been suppressed." When asked to clarify he said: "There are Islamic movements here that are feeding off the people's discontent, they are operating in the neighborhoods, girls are taking to the veil like never before, and they are stealthy as they know that the current climate is not conducive for them." He went on to say that this was partly a result of Wade's continual attempts to draw the Mouride brotherhood into the political arena at the expense of the Tidjani brotherhood, who now feel threatened by the ascendancy of the Marabouts from Touba. He went on to say that farmers are suffering and that the situation is grave for many Senegalese. Dieng was more circumspect, remarking that while Senegal may not necessarily end up like Somalia, the nature of the African state is a weak one and that a lack of dialogue could easily open the door for non-democratic forces to step in.

Comment

15. (C) While it is true that the people are facing tough economic circumstances, to say that Senegal may end up like Somalia is far-fetched. However, a lack of political discourse combined with an increasingly unhappy populace over the price of basic necessities make a National Dialogue the kind of platform that could formulate new ideas to move the country in the right direction. This suggestion has

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generated some interest from civil society groups and NGOs but without Wade or the PDS in attendance, it can only go so far. Meanwhile, immediately upon his return from vacation Wade stole the headlines from the opposition by announcing his plan to build seven new high-speed train lines by the end of his tenure in 2012 (Note: With this statement he also quashed rumors that he will step down after two years). As has been his style, Wade continues to feed people dreams about what Senegal could be instead of presenting sound economic plans to alleviate immediate hardships. As one Embassy contact pointed out, "It is unusual for a family in Senegal to eat three square meals a day." The real question thus remains how long a diet of dreams will suffice before popular patience is exhausted.

Participants

16. (SBU)

United States

CDA Jay Smith
Political Officer Osman Tat
Public Affairs Officer Robin Diallo
Political Specialist El Hadj Sarr

The Opposition

Ousmane Tanor Dieng: First Secretary of the Socialist Party
Amath Dansokho: Secretary General of the Party for
Independence and Labor
Madielna Diouf: Deputy Secretary General of the Alliance
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SMITH